

georgia.gov marks first year successes

Renewing a driver's license, checking on a child support payment, or registering a business...these tasks used to mean phone calls or visits to state offices and sometimes several days to accomplish.

That was before the July 2002 launch of georgia.gov, the official state portal. Georgians can complete more transactions online than ever before, and more people are using georgia.gov as a primary point of access to government information and services. Since the portal was launched, page visits have increased from 1.4 million to 2.5 million every month, and GTA continues to work with agencies to bring more services online.

The first service to debut on the portal — online driver's license renewal — remains popular. More than 40,000 Georgians have renewed their license online, by phone or mail without going to a state office.

Each month, thousands of Georgia parents go online to find out the status of child support payments using "Where's My Child's Check?" on the portal. (See story on page 3.) According to one parent, "I no longer have to suffer through busy signals when trying to find out payment information. I can go to the Internet at my convenience and obtain information about payments."

The portal comes in handy for business owners as well. More than 2,000 Georgia businesses have headed to the portal to obtain a state sales tax identification number and a Federal Employee Identification Number (FEIN). The separate processes used to take several days each, but now business owners can get their FEIN immediately and turnaround time for a sales tax identification number is much shorter. ■

A great time for agencies to come on board

Now is a great time for agencies to shift their Web content to the state's Web portal, georgia.gov.

During FY 2004, agencies will not incur any charges from the Georgia Technology Authority for moving their content or applications onto the portal or for hosting and contact center services.

After this initial period, a rating system and cost model will determine each agency's charge for the services they use. GTA is ready to

assist agencies with budget projections for portal services in FY 2005.

"Charges for FY 2005 will be competitive and in most cases lower than comparable private sector rates," said Gina Tiedemann, director of GTA's GeorgiaNet division. "That's because we use a true enterprise-class interoperability architecture for the operation of georgia.gov."

Joining the portal is likely an agency's most cost-effective option for putting information and services online. It brings many advantages:

- a georgia.gov URL, an easy-to-remember Web address
- clear organization of information to make it easier for constituents to find what they need without having to learn how state government works
- a software tool for adding and updating information

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*Bringing the benefits of technology
to Georgia government*

Securing state data and IT systems: Agency group explores best practices

Protecting state IT systems is serious business. No room for error exists when it comes to guarding against unauthorized access.

They're essential to public safety, especially in emergencies, and state databases often include personal information about Georgia residents. That's why 22 participants from 11 state agencies came together this summer to set technical standards for storing and transmitting data across state IT networks. The participants include both program managers and IT professionals. Their efforts are part of the third session of the Georgia Digital Academy, a learning program sponsored by GTA that brings state agencies together to develop technical solutions to common business problems.

The academy began in 2002 with a session to address the challenge of managing large volumes of paper documents by converting them to electronic formats. The second session dealt with directory services, the management of resources such as printers and e-mail access on local area networks.

Participants in the current session are meeting weekly from June through November to come up with recommendations all agencies can use.

They're exploring the best ways to

- separate data into categories according to the degree of protection required by federal and state laws
- restrict access to only those agency positions with a business need for the data
- set technical standards
- develop a plan to implement more stringent and consistent security procedures in their respective agencies.

Participants are learning more about the latest security requirements from the federal government in such areas as homeland security, law enforcement and health care. They are also taking part in the National Information Assurance Program. The program is sponsored by a partnership of federal agencies to promote the development of security-related technical

requirements for IT products and systems. It also devises ways to measure the performance of these products and systems.

The current academy session gave participants the opportunity to attend a conference on privacy and access sponsored in July by the **Archives Division of the Office of the Secretary of State**.

So far, participants have identified the various kinds of information held by their respective agencies and linked the information to specific business operations. They have begun sorting the information into categories in accordance with state and federal security requirements.

Southern Polytechnic State University, which facilitated both previous academy sessions, is also leading the current session. There is no direct cost to participating agencies. ■

Participants in the Georgia Digital Academy on data security decided to organize themselves in two major groups.

The justice league includes agencies whose primary mission is law enforcement and criminal justice. It's led by **Tony Mazza** of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles.

- Administrative Office of the Courts
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Georgia Bureau of Investigation
- Georgia State Patrol
- State Board of Pardons and Paroles

The second group includes all other participating agencies. It's led by **Joe Michalko** of the Department of Transportation.

- Department of Administrative Services
- Department of Banking and Finance
- Department of Community Affairs
- Department of Transportation
- Georgia Student Finance Commission

The Department of Audits and the Archives Division of the Office of the Secretary of State are serving as advisors.

Online child support info boosts productivity, offers convenience



More than 2,000 times a day, Georgia parents use “Where’s My Child’s Check?” to find out the status of child support payments. The service is available on the state portal at www.georgia.gov.

Developed by the **Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR)** and GTA, the service was available to a limited number of parents beginning in October 2002. In March, more than 200,000 parents received notices about the service and an identification number for accessing their child’s information.

The online service has helped increase productivity, allowing child support workers to spend more time working on child support enforcement actions instead of on the telephone relaying information they have already entered into the computer system.

Robert Swain, deputy director of DHR’s

Office of Child Support Enforcement, said the impact is clear. “The automation of WMCC contributed to higher child support collections — an increase of \$32 million — despite the recession and an inability to hire staff.”

Parents who use “Where’s My Child’s Check?” are enthusiastic about the convenience and

access to their information.

Program Director Cindy Moss said she has not heard a single negative comment about “Where’s My Child’s Check?”

“Parents tell us the site is wonderful,” she said.

The online service also has affected customer

service calls, Ms. Moss said. “Before it was launched, more than a third of all calls to the child support unit concerned payment information,” she said. “Calls about payments now account for less than five percent of all calls.” ■

“... By using technology to streamline government services, the state is serving its customers with greater efficiency. This is an example of providing better service while saving time and increasing productivity.”

Governor Sonny Perdue,
about “Where’s My Child’s Check?”

georgia.gov, from page 1

- training for non-technical agency staff
- a contact center that provides quick response to help users find the information they need
- architecture that allows for application reuse, integration with existing data sources and collaboration among agencies on shared applications.

Other benefits include security, privacy protection, interoperability and the ability to accommodate increased content and usage that come with a centrally managed portal.

All agencies have a portal presence

The launch of georgia.gov included the redesign of 250 state Web pages. Since then, an increasing number of state agencies, including the **Department of Human Resources**, the **Office of the Inspector General**, the **Office of Lieutenant Governor**, **State Roads and Tollway Authority** and GTA have added their online content to the portal.

All state agencies now have an online business card, a basic Web presence on the portal, and the [Joining georgia.gov Guide](#) is also available to help agencies add their content to the portal.

GTA is available to consult with agencies about developing their site within portal standards and to

provide quality assurance.

“Starting to bring agencies into the unified look and feel of georgia.gov was a big win for everyone,” said Jeff Kuenn, who heads up the Atlanta creative team that manages the georgia.gov front-end, its design and content. “This is just a first iteration. It’s meant to evolve and grow as the needs of the constituent are further known.”

Erica Keller is a GTA project manager responsible for many georgia.gov activities. “The first year was about bringing services and content online to help pilot the processes and define how we should be working with agencies,” she said. “We want to work like a well-oiled machine.”

To find out more about joining georgia.gov, contact your GTA account manager. ■

Contact center provides rapid response

Portal users who need help with online transactions can get it quickly from the georgia.gov Contact Center. Since the contact center began operation on July 1, 2002, agents have answered more than 21,000 calls and 7,000 e-mail messages.

- 99.3% of all callers waited less than 20 seconds to talk to a customer service representative.
- 99.8% of all e-mails were answered within 24 business hours.

Building a better RFP: Agencies and vendors share tips

Coming up with a request for proposal (RFP) to address a business problem can be a problem in itself.

To help agencies write effective RFPs for IT products and services, the **Georgia Document Management Association** (GDMA) sponsored a day-long procurement workshop June 23 at **Southern Polytechnic State University** (SPSU) in Marietta. Twenty-two attendees from 14 state agencies heard presentations from Charles Brooks, a GTA procurement officer with 20 years of experience in procurement, and Bud Porter-Roth, a published author, consultant and expert on writing RFPs.

The workshop also included brainstorming sessions where participants asked questions and shared their ideas and first-hand experiences in developing and responding to RFPs.

The workshop was co-sponsored by SPSU and the Peachtree Chapter of the Association for Information and Image Management.

Although the workshop focused on the electronic imaging and management of documents, much of the information could apply to any RFP. Here are highlights from the day's events.

Why do agencies have trouble writing RFPs?

Agency staff say it's often hard to understand the language used in RFPs. Sometimes they don't know how to clearly define their needs or what to ask for. Agencies also say they may not understand the technology required to address their business needs. It's difficult to keep up because technology changes all the time.

Why don't vendors respond to RFPs?

Vendors also cite agencies' lack of knowledge about technology because it results in unrealistic expectations about costs and performance. The timeframe for responding to an RFP may be too short, especially if the RFP is complicated. Sometimes the RFP is ambiguous. This situation can be made worse by a lack of opportunities to talk with agencies about their requirements. And a vendor might decide it simply costs too much in terms of time, money, personnel, risks or performance bonds.

What should agencies do before writing an RFP?

Before agencies spend too much time and money putting together an RFP, Mr. Porter-Roth suggested they go through the following steps.

- ☐ Organize a study team and involve everyone in your organization who has a stake in the outcome of the RFP.
- ☐ Define the business problem you need to solve.
- ☐ Establish criteria for measuring the winning vendor's performance, and know when you've achieved success in the project.
- ☐ Research the market for current products and services to make sure a solution to your problem actually exists. Verify that it can help you meet business objectives. Visit other agencies and businesses to find out how they addressed a similar problem.
- ☐ Establish conditions for proceeding with the RFP. Be prepared to drop development of the RFP if your conditions aren't met.
- ☐ Figure out if your agency needs to analyze, and possibly redesign, its current business processes. Don't begin a business-process analysis unless it's really needed. It takes time, money and people.
- ☐ Present the study group's findings to everyone in the organization with a stake in the outcome of the RFP. Get their agreement before going forward. ■

A resource for state agencies

GDMA is a user group of IT professionals in state government. It resulted from the Georgia Digital Academy session on document management. GDMA assists agencies with making decisions about electronic imaging and management of documents, electronic forms, workflow, data exchange and related technologies. For more information, visit GDMA's Web site at <http://gdma.intranets.com>.

GTA took steps this summer to prevent state e-mail servers from being used to relay spam e-mail.

GTA asked agencies to make sure their e-mail servers were configured so they couldn't be secretly used by spammers to relay spam. Unless e-mail servers are properly secured, spammers can access them without the administrator's knowledge and use them to send spam.

We also asked agencies to check lists of e-mail servers known to relay spam to determine if their servers were on the lists. Several organizations scan the Internet to find e-mail servers responsible for sending spam. The organizations then place the IP addresses of these servers in databases called RealTime Black Lists.

"Through these efforts, e-mail servers in three state agencies were found on black lists," said GTA

Internal Technology Manager Robbie Head, who helped lead the effort. "These servers are now configured so they can't be used to relay spam."

The steps agencies took this summer are also helping to ensure their e-mails reach intended recipients. Some organizations use a black list to keep spam e-mail from getting into their workers' electronic inboxes. A software program checks every incoming e-mail to determine the IP address of the server sending the e-mail. Then it looks for the IP address on the black list it uses. If the software program finds the IP address, it instructs the e-mail server to refuse the e-mail. In July, GTA began using black lists on all statewide e-mail servers. ■

GTA video unit producing GBI training video

GTA's multimedia unit is producing a new training video about the dangers of clandestine methamphetamine labs.

The video is in production for the **Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI)**. It will be used to teach first responders how to protect themselves if they discover one of these labs. The GBI will distribute the video to law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and caseworkers.

Methamphetamine labs pose a serious health risk to first responders. They include exposure to

toxic chemicals used in the drug's production, explosion, fire and the unpredictable behavior of a person under the drug's influence.

The production unit has made informational and training tapes for numerous state agencies and received several national awards recognizing the quality of its work. The tapes are not made for television broadcast but for distribution in VHS, CD or DVD formats. The production unit also works with **Georgia Public Broadcasting** to make tapes available for viewing on agency Web sites. ■



In a GBI training video, first responders demonstrate the proper way to wear hazmat suits and equipment. The video is being produced by GTA's multimedia unit, which can help agencies with videos for use in training or on their Web sites.

Network availability exceeds goals

All IT systems operated by GTA were working in support of agency applications for more than 96 percent of the time scheduled for FY 2003, surpassing the data center's goal of 95 percent. Systems availability topped 7,200 hours, while unplanned outages accounted for less than 300 hours for the entire fiscal year. The data center is off to a good start for FY 04: Operating environment availability for July was 99.5 percent.

The state data center provides support for more than 125 state IT systems, such as personnel, payroll, purchasing, invoice payments, billing and revenue collections for 100 agencies, including the largest agencies in state government. The center also supports critical systems such as law enforcement, child support payments, temporary assistance to needy families and payments to retirees. ■

What's new in IT? See for yourself at the Government Technology Conference

Find out about the latest IT trends for the public sector at the third annual Southeast Government Technology Conference (GTC), to be held November 18-20, 2003, at the Georgia International Convention Center in Atlanta.

James D. Lester III, chairman of the GTA Board of Directors, will deliver a keynote address on Wednesday, November 18, at 8:30 a.m. Mr. Lester is chief information officer for the American Family Life Assurance Company (AFLAC), and he will discuss the role of technology and telecommunications in government.

GTC offers government IT professionals, business managers and executives the opportunity to keep pace with rapid advances in technology and share ideas about policy and management with peers from other agencies and states. GTC features nationally known speakers, a variety of timely training classes and seminars, and exhibits from computer and telecommunications firms with IT products and services for state and local governments.

Keynote addresses and vendor exhibits are open to everyone without charge, but registration is necessary for classes and seminars. To register online, visit Government Technology's Web site at www.govtech.net/gtc. ■

Several state government officials serve on the GTC advisory board:

Tom Wade, GTA, co-chair
Deborah Belcher, Georgia Merit System
Debra Dlugolenski, Department of Technical and Adult Education
Bill Holland, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
John Hurd, Department of Human Resources
Sondra Rhoades-Johnson, GTA
Steve Nichols, GTA
Billie Sherrod, Department of Education
Jeff Strane, Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism
Commissioner Michael Thurmond, Department of Labor

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